

CONNECTING CABLE FOR HELMETS

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present invention claims the benefit of Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-337034, filed November 6, 2000, the entirety of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to a communication system for a helmet that is provided with a handset and a communication unit, and more specifically, to a connecting cable to be connected to the helmet via a magnet connector.

2. Description of Background Art

[0003] A communication system for enabling communication between occupants (intercommunication system) in which a speaker, a microphone, and electric contacts thereof are provided on the helmet of each occupant. A communication unit mounted on the vehicle and the helmet of each occupant are connected with a cable for enabling communication between each occupants riding on a straddling type vehicle, such as a widespread use of a motorcycle.

[0004] In the intercommunication system developed for so-called motorcycle cops, a one-touch cable for a motorcycle cop's helmet for connecting between the communication unit fixed on the vehicle and the helmet is provided. The one-touch cable connects the communication unit and the helmet electrically and mechanically

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by connecting a magnetic-body-side socket mounted on the helmet and a magnet-side socket provided at one end of the dedicated cable.

[0005] In the related art described above, since the dedicated cable is provided with a magnet-side socket at one end thereof, when it is stored in the pocket or in the bag for carrying, magnetic field lines generated by the magnet may exert a damaging effect on a magnetic card or a magnetic recording medium in the pocket or in the bag.

[0006] Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to solve the problem in the related art described above and to provide a connecting cable for helmets in which to reduce a magnetically damaging effect on the magnetic card or the like, even if it is carried together with the magnetic card, the magnetic recording medium or the like.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] In order to solve the object described above, the present invention is characterized in that a cable for connecting the handset of the helmet and the communication unit comprises a magnetic-body-side socket to be detachably connected to a magnet-side socket of the helmet, which is provided with the magnet-side socket of the magnet connector at one end thereof.

[0008] According to the characteristic described above, since a magnet-side socket (i.e., a source for generating magnetic field lines out of a pair of connectors) constituting a magnetic connector is mounted on the helmet, and no source of magnetic field lines exists on the cable, the possibility that magnetically damaging effect is exerted on the magnetic card or the like is reduced, even when the cable is stored and carried in the pocket or in the bag together with the magnetic card.

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[0009] According to the present invention, in the structure where the helmet and the cable are connected by the magnet connector, the magnet-side socket (i.e., a source of magnetic field lines) is mounted on the helmet, and the magnetic-body-side socket (i.e., a source of magnetic field lines not provided) is mounted to the cable. Therefore, the possibility to exert a magnetically damaging effect on the magnetic card, magnetic recording medium, or the like is reduced, even when the cable is stored and carried in the pocket or in the bag with the magnetic card.

[0010] Further scope of applicability of the present invention will become apparent from the detailed description given hereinafter. However, it should be understood that the detailed description and specific examples, while indicating preferred embodiments of the invention, are given by way of illustration only, since various changes and modifications within the spirit and scope of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art from this detailed description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] The present invention will become more fully understood from the detailed description given hereinbelow and the accompanying drawings, which are given by way of illustration only, and thus are not limitative of the present invention, and wherein:

[0012] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a communication system for vehicles to which the present invention is applied;

[0013] FIG. 2 is a rear view of the helmet;

[0014] FIG. 3 is a block diagram of the communication unit;

[0015] FIG. 4 is a drawing showing a signal waveform of the principal portion

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of the communication unit;

[0016] FIG. 5 is another block diagram of the communication system for vehicles to which the present invention is applied;

[0017] FIG. 6 is still another block diagram of the communication system for vehicles to which the present invention is applied;

[0018] FIG. 7(a) and 7(b) are drawings showing a layout of the communication unit on the vehicle;

[0019] FIG. 8 is a drawing showing an embodiment (1) of the connecting cable for connecting the communication unit and the helmet;

[0020] FIG. 9 is a drawing showing an embodiment (2) of the connecting cable for connecting the communication unit and the helmet;

[0021] FIG. 10 is a drawing showing an embodiment (3) of the connecting cable for connecting the communication unit and the helmet;

[0022] FIG. 11 is a drawing showing how to store the connecting cable shown in FIG. 9; and

[0023] FIG. 12 is a drawing showing how to extend the connecting cable shown in FIG. 9.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0024] Referring now to the drawings, the present invention will be described in detail. FIG. 1 is a drawing showing a construction of a communication system for vehicles to which the present invention is applied, whereby communication between two occupants riding on the same vehicle, or between the driver and the fellow passenger, will be described as an example hereinafter.

[0025] A helmet 1 that each occupant wears is provided with a microphone 11

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and a speaker 12, respectively. The external contacts of the microphone 11 and the speaker 12 are exposed toward the outside at the magnet-side socket 2, which is one of the sockets of the magnet connector. Each cable extending from the communication unit 4 is provided at the tip with a magnetic-body-side socket 3, which is the other socket of the magnet connector. The helmet 1 and the cable 5 are connected electrically and mechanically via the magnet connector including the magnet-side socket 2 and the magnetic-body-side socket 3, which constitutes a pair.

[0026] As shown in an enlarged view in the same figure, (i.e., the circle with dotted lines), the connecting surface of the magnetic-body-side socket 3 is formed with an annular rib 31 standing upward along the periphery, a magnetic body plate 32 attached on the bottom portion, and a plurality of electrodes 34 exposed on the upper surface of the island-shaped portion 33 swelling from the bottom portion. However, no source of magnetic field lines is provided. The cable 5 is drawn via a shock-absorbing bush 34.

[0027] FIG. 2 is a rear view of the helmet 1 in a state where the magnetic-body-side socket 3 of the cable 5 is not attached, and a connecting surface of the magnet-side socket 2 of the magnet connector is exposed. The connecting surface of the magnet-side socket 2 (as shown in the enlarged view in a dotted circle) on the right-hand side of the same figure is provided with a South pole iron strip 21S and North pole iron strip 21N and a plurality of electrodes 23 exposed on the bottom portion within the recess 22. Accordingly, when they are connected with the magnet-body-side socket 3, the electrodes 23, 34 are brought into contact with each other for establishing electric connection.

[0028] The communication unit 4 is detachably fixed to an appropriate position of the vehicle or attached on the body or stored in the dressing of one of the

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[0032] The speaker amplifier 45p amplifies the input signal and feeds it to the speaker 12p mounted on the helmet 1 of the fellow passenger. The speaker amplifier 45d amplifies the input signal and feeds it to the speaker 12d mounted on

the helmet 1 of the driver. Each speaker amplifier 45p, 45d is provided with a mute terminal, and when a control signal of "H" level is fed to the mute terminal, it attenuates or shuts down the output signal.

[0033] The amplifier provided with a mixer feature (mixer amplifier) 46 synthesizes and amplifies the output signal from the microphone amplifiers 41d, 41p and outputs it to a VOX detecting circuit 44, and then to a sneezing, etc. detecting circuit 48 via the HPL 47.

[0034] The VOX detecting circuit 44 includes a level detecting circuit 44a and a delay circuit 44b (5 seconds in this embodiment). When the level detecting circuit 44a detected a signal higher than the reference value Vref1, it sets the output signal to “L” level, and maintains the level “L” for five seconds, even after the moment when a signal higher than the reference value Vref1 is not detected any more.

[0035] The reference value Vref1 is set to the value close to the minimum value of an acoustic signal that is probably detected when the occupants are communicating. Therefore, when the output of the mixer amplifier 46 exceeds the reference value Vref1, it is determined that they are communicating with each other and when it is below the reference value Vref1, it is determined that they are not communicating.

[0036] The sneezing, etc. detecting circuit 48 includes a level detecting circuit 48a and a delay circuit 48b (0.7 seconds in this embodiment). When the level detecting circuit 48a detects a signal higher than the reference value Vref2, it sets the output signal to “H” level only for 0.7 seconds. The value 0.7 seconds is a time period that is considered to be a maximum period of time where physiological sound generated by one sneeze or a cough continues. The reference value Vref2 is set to the value close to the minimum value of a signal level that is probably detected

when the input signal is generated by physiological sound, such as sneezing or coughing. Therefore, when the output from the mixer amplifier 46 exceeds the reference value V_{ref2} , it is determined that the input signal at this moment is a signal caused by a physiological sound, such as sneezing or coughing.

[0037] An OR circuit 49 feeds a logical add of an output signal from the VOX circuit 44 and the output from the sneezing, etc. detecting circuit 48 to the mute terminal of each speaker amplifier 45p, 45d as a control signal. The operating switch 40 includes a switch for varying the reference values V_{ref1} and V_{ref2} , the delay time of the delay circuits 44b, 48b, and the gain of the speaker amplifiers 45p, 45d.

[0038] FIG. 4 is a drawing showing a signal waveform of the principal portion of the above-described communication unit 4. Since the acoustic signal supplied from the mixer amplifier 46 is below the reference value V_{ref1} until the time t_1 , the output of the VOX detecting circuit 44 is maintained at "H" level. As a consequent, the output of the OR circuit 49 is at the level "H" and each speaker amplifier 45p, 45d is muted. Accordingly, the power consumption of the speaker amplifiers 45p, 45d may be significantly saved.

[0039] Subsequently, when the communication between the occupants is started and the output from the mixer amplifier 46 increases and exceeds the reference value V_{ref1} at the time t_1 , the output from the VOX detecting circuit 44 is switched to the level "L". At this moment, the output of the sneezing, etc. detecting circuit 48 is still maintained at the level "L", and thus the output from the OR circuit 49 is also the level "L". As a consequent, each speaker amplifier 45p, 45d is released from the muted state, and thus an acoustic signal fed from each HPF 42, 43 is amplified at each speaker amplifier 45p, 45d and supplied from each speaker 12p, 12d.

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[0040] Subsequently, when the communication is stopped at the time t2, and the output from the mixer amplifier 46 is decreased to the value below the reference value Vref1 and maintained at this value for 5 seconds, the output from the VOX detecting circuit 44 is switched to the level "H" at the time t3. As a consequent, the output from the OR circuit 49 is increased to the level "H", and each speaker amplifier 45p, 45d is muted again.

[0041] Then, when the communication is restarted and the output from the mixer amplifier 46 exceeds the reference value Vref1 at the time t4, the output from the VOX detecting circuit 44 is switched to the level "L". At this time, since the output from the sneezing, etc. detecting circuit 48 is still at the level "L", the output from the OR circuit 49 is also decreased to the level "L". As a consequent, each speaker amplifier 45p, 45d is released from the muted state, and thus an acoustic sound is supplied from each speaker 12p, 12d.

[0042] When one of the occupants sneezes during the communication and the output from the mixer amplifier 46 exceeds the reference value Vref2 at the time t5, the output from the sneezing, etc. detecting circuit 48 is switched to the level "H", and the delay circuit 48b actuates the 0.7 seconds timer. As a consequent, the output from the OR circuit 49 is increased to the level "H" only for 0.7 seconds and each speaker amplifier 45p, 45d is muted. Therefore, the speaker does not reproduce the sound of sneezing.

[0043] The physiological phenomenon such as sneezing or coughing finishes in a short time, and thus the output of the mixer amplifier 46 is already decreased to the value below the reference value Vref2 at the time t6. Therefore, in this embodiment, at the time t7 when the 0.7 seconds timer of the delay circuit 48b is timed out. The physiological sound is considered to have attenuated completely,

and thus the output from the sneezing, etc. detecting circuit 48 is returned to the level "L". On the other hand, when the communication continues for more than 5 seconds at the time period from the time t4 to the time t7, the output from the VOX detecting circuit 44 is maintained at the level "L", and thus the output from the OR circuit is decreased to the level "L" again where the communication is enabled.

[0044] According to this embodiment, sneezing or coughing is determined from the signal level, and when sneezing or coughing is detected, the mixer amplifier is muted for a prescribed time period (0.7 seconds in this embodiment). Therefore, reproducing of the physiological sound, such as sneezing or coughing from the speaker of the partner may be prevented with a very simple construction.

[0045] In the above-described embodiment, the muting time period by the sneezing, etc. detecting circuit 48 is set to 0.7 seconds. However, it is preferable that the muting time period is set to approximately five seconds in order to cope with continuous sneezing. Since sneezing or coughing stops within five seconds in many cases, the muting time period is preferably set to the range between 0.7 to 5 seconds.

[0046] Since the volume and duration of sneezing or coughing varies among individuals, in this embodiment, the operating switch 40 is provided for varying the reference value Vref2 or the setting time of the delay circuit 48b. Therefore, by adjusting the reference value Vref2 or the delay time according to the condition of the user, the communication being disturbed due to too long muting time period, or in contrast, the physiological sound cannot be shut down due to too short muting time period can be solved.

[0047] In the above-described embodiment, it is described that the sneezing, etc. detecting circuit 48 compares the input signal with the reference value Vref2, and

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determines the signal exceeding the reference value V_{ref2} as a signal corresponding to sneezing or coughing. However, the present invention is not limited thereto, and it is also possible to construct in such a manner that the sneezing, etc. detecting circuit 48 is constructed by a differentiating circuit for detecting the rate of change of the input signal. A sharp input signal such that the starting rate of change exceeds a prescribed reference rate of change is determined to be an input signal corresponding to sneezing and coughing.

[0048] In the above-described embodiment, though it is described that the communication unit 4 is a mobile type that is detachable with respect to the vehicle body, it may be the fixed type that can be fixed on the vehicle. When the communication unit 4 is fixed on the vehicle, it is preferable to fix it in the vicinity of the handle grip in order to provide a good operability. However, since the position in the vicinity of the handle grip is displaced to a large extent when steering the handle, the connecting cable 5 may disturb steering of the handle. Therefore, in order to modify the communication unit 4 to a vehicle fixing type, as shown in FIG. 5 and FIG. 6, preferably, the communication unit 4 is divided into the final controlling element 4a, including the operating switch 40 and the relay section 4b, whereby both are connected by a junction cable 4c, and as shown in FIG. 7(a) and FIG. 7(b). The final controlling element 4a is disposed in the vicinity of the handle grip. The relay section 4b is fixed for example at the center of the handle where displacement during steering of the handle is small.

[0049] When modifying the communication unit 4 to a fixed type, it is required that the cable 5 can be detached from the communication unit 4 as shown in FIG. 5 and FIG. 6. In this case as well, considering the possibility that the cable 5 is stored in the pocket or in the bag, as shown in FIG. 8, the cable 5 may be provided with a

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magnetic-body-side socket 3 at the end to be connected to the helmet and with a plug 6 at the end to be connected to the communication unit 4, so that the plug 6 is inserted into a jack (not shown) provided on the communication unit 4 to connect both of them.

[0050] However, the occupant of the motorcycle wears gloves in many cases, and thus it is preferable that connection between the communication unit 4 and the cable 5 can be performed with the gloves worn. However, connection between the above-described plug 6 and a jack is difficult in a state of wearing gloves since the plug 6 have to be inserted into a small bore on the jack.

[0051] In addition, in the case of connection between the plug 6 and the jack, when a load to separate the communication unit 4 is fixed on the vehicle and the cable 5 is applied between them, and when the direction of a load is deviated from the direction of insertion of the plug 6, a large load may be applied to the plug 6 or the jack upon separation.

[0052] In order to solve such problems, as shown in FIG. 9, a magnetic-body-side socket 3 may be provided on the cable 5 on the side of the communication unit 4 as well as on the side of the helmet, and connected to the magnet-side socket 2 provided on the communication unit 4. In this arrangement, there is not a magnet-side socket 2 as a source of magnetic field lines on the cable 5, and thus exertion of magnetically damaging effect on other contents, such as a magnetic card or the like can be prevented, even when it is stored in the pocket or in the bag together with the magnetic card or the like.

[0053] In addition, when it is constructed in such a manner that each helmet 1 and the communication unit 4 are connected independently with two cables 5, as shown in FIG. 6, the magnet-side socket 2 and the magnetic-body-side socket 3 may

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be provided on each end of the cable 5, as shown in FIG. 10, so that the magnet-side-socket 2 is connected to the magnetic-body-side socket 3 provided on the communication unit 4.

[0054] In this arrangement, when carrying the cable 5, by connecting the magnet-side socket 2 and the magnetic-body-side socket 3 provided on each end of the cable 5 as shown in FIG. 11, a magnetic force generated from the magnet-side socket 2 forms a closed magnetic path in the magnet connector, and thus the magnetic field lines do not leak out. Therefore, even when the cable 5 is stored together with the magnetic card, exertion of magnetically damaging effect on the magnetic card can be reduced.

[0055] In addition, when the magnet-side socket 2 and the magnetic-body-side socket 3 are provided on each end of the cable 5 as described above, a plurality of cables 5 may be connected in series as shown in FIG. 12, and thus the cable can easily be extended.

[0056] The invention being thus described, it will be obvious that the same may be varied in many ways. Such variations are not to be regarded as a departure from the spirit and scope of the invention, and all such modifications as would be obvious to one skilled in the art are intended to be included within the scope of the following claims.